February 2002

RAINWATER WILDLIFE AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

A COLUMBIA BASIN WILDLIFE MITIGATION PROJECT

Executive Summary

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RAINWATER WILDLIFE AREA
Management Plan
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Columbia Basin Wildlife Mitigation Project

February 2002

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Department Natural Resources Wildlife Program

For
United States Department of Energy
Bonneville Power Administration
CONTRACT NUMBER 95BI49407

CONFEDERATED TRIBES
UMATILLA INDIAN RESERVATION

BONNEVILLE
POWER ADMINISTRATION

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I. INTRODUCTION

This Executive Summary provides an overview of the Draft Rainwater Wildlife Area Management Plan. The comprehensive plan can be viewed on the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) website at: www.umatilla.nsn.us or requested in hard copy from the CTUIR at the address below.

The wildlife area was established in September 1998 when the CTUIR purchased the Rainwater Ranch through Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) for purposes of fish and wildlife mitigation for the McNary and John Day dams. The Management Plan has been developed under a standardized planning process developed by BPA for Columbia River Basin Wildlife Mitigation Projects (See Guiding Policies Section below).

The plan outlines the framework for managing the project area, provides an assessment of existing conditions and key resource issues, and presents an array of habitat management and enhancement strategies. The plan culminates into a 5-Year Action Plan that will focus management actions and prioritize funding during the 2002-2006 planning period.

Since acquisition of the property in late 1998, the CTUIR has conducted an extensive baseline resource assessment in preparation for the management plan, initiated habitat restoration in the Griffin Fork drainage to address road-related resource damage caused by roads constructed for forest practices and an extensive flood event in 1996, and initiated infrastructure developments associated with the Access and Travel Management Plan (i.e., installed parking areas, gates, and public information signs).

In addition to these efforts, the CTUIR has worked to set up a long-term funding mechanism with BPA through the NPPC Fish and Wildlife Program. The CTUIR has also continued to coordinate closely with local and state government organizations to ensure consistency with local land use laws and maintain open lines of communication regarding important issues such as big game hunting, tribal member exercise of treaty rights, and public access.

During the past two years, non-Indian public concern over big game hunting issues has at times overwhelmed other issues related to the wildlife area. In 2001, the CTUIR Fish and Wildlife Committee closed the wildlife area to tribal branch antlered bull elk harvest in response to harvest data that indicated harvest rates were greater than expected. In addition, illegal harvest of mature bull elk in southeastern Washington during the 2001 season exceeded the legal tribal and non-tribal harvest combined which has created a potential significant regression in the bull;cow ratio in the Blue Mountain Elk herd.

CTUIR Fish and Wildlife Committee and staff and Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife Regional Director and staff have been coordinating regularly to develop strategies to address harvest rates and ensure protection of viable big game herds in southeastern Washington. The CTUIR Fish and Wildlife Committee and WDFW has jointly agreed to continue close coordination on this and other issues and continue working together to ensure the long-term vigor of the elk herd on the Rainwater Wildlife Area.

Funding and administrative oversight for the project is provided pursuant to the Washington Wildlife Mitigation Agreement (DEMS79-93BP94146, April, 1993) and Memorandum Of Agreement (MOA), October 1997 between the CTUIR and BPA through the Northwest Power Planning Council (NPPC) Fish and Wildlife Program. For project related information, contact the CTUIR Project Manager, Allen Childs by telephone (541) 966-2391, email AllenChilds@ctuir.com, or by letter at CTUIR, P.O. Box 638, Pendleton, Oregon 97801.

Wildlife Area Description and Location

The approximate 8,700 acre Rainwater Wildlife Area is located approximately 8 miles south of Dayton, Washington in Columbia County within the Walla Walla Subbasin along the South Fork Touchet River adjacent to and north of the Umatilla National Forest. The project legal description is Township 7 North, Range 39 East, all or portions of Sections 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9; Township 8 North, Range 39 East, all or portions of Sections 5, 8, 9, 17, 19, 20, 21, 27, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, and 34, Willamette Meridian. The area is located within the aboriginal homeland of the CTUIR. (See Figures 1 and 2, CTUIR Ceded Territory and Project Vicinity Map, respectively).

Historical Overview

Historically, the Rainwater property was part of the aboriginal homelands of the CTUIR that was ceded to the U.S. Government in the 1855 Treaty of Walla Walla. Most of the lands of the Rainwater Wildlife Area were owned by the Rainwater family from the early 1900's until 1991. Two different timber companies owned the property from 1991 through 1998 before being sold to the CTUIR on September 11, 1998. Throughout most of the 20th century, the property was used for grazing livestock, logging, and recreational hunting and fishing.

Figure 1 – CTUIR Ceded Territory Map

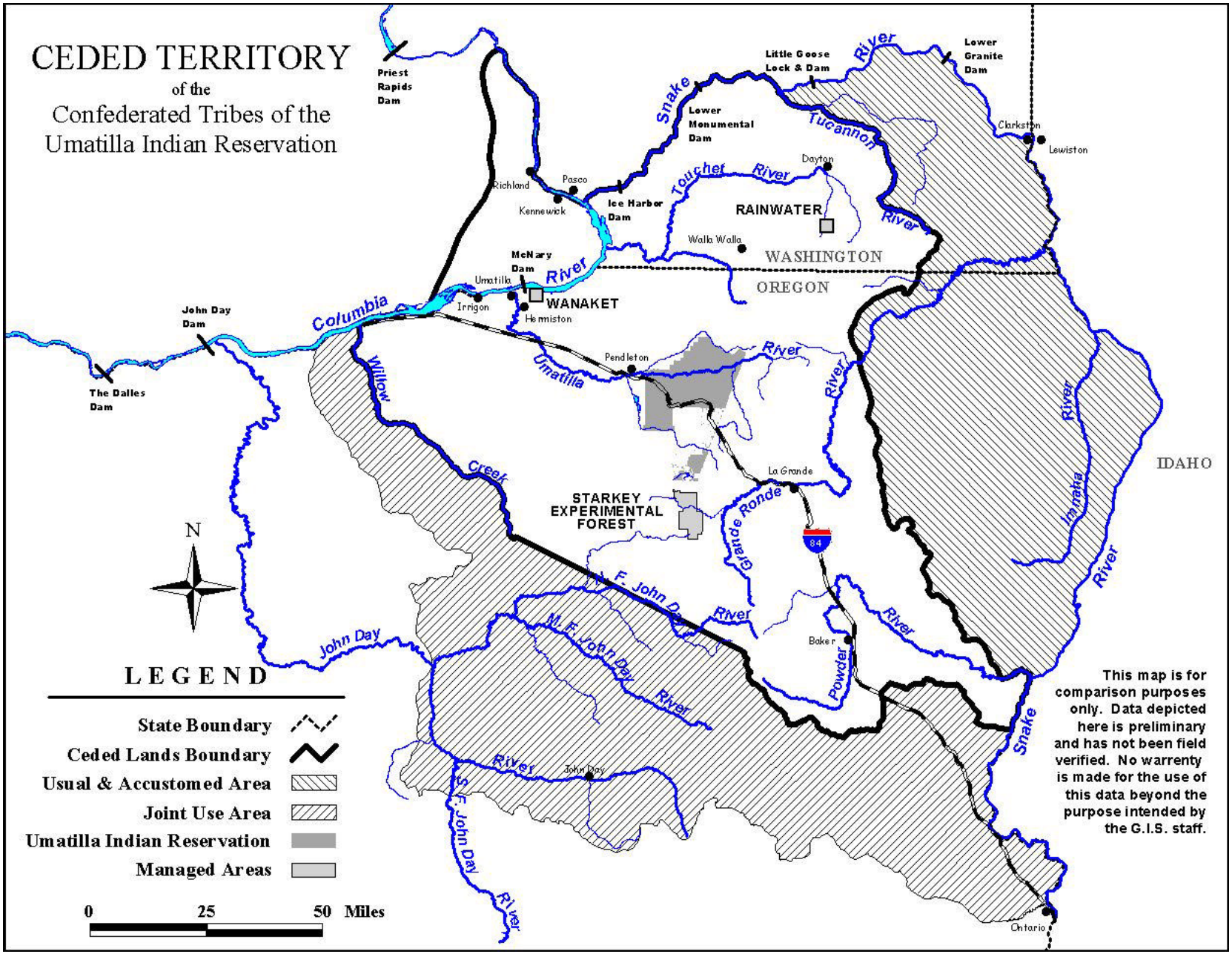
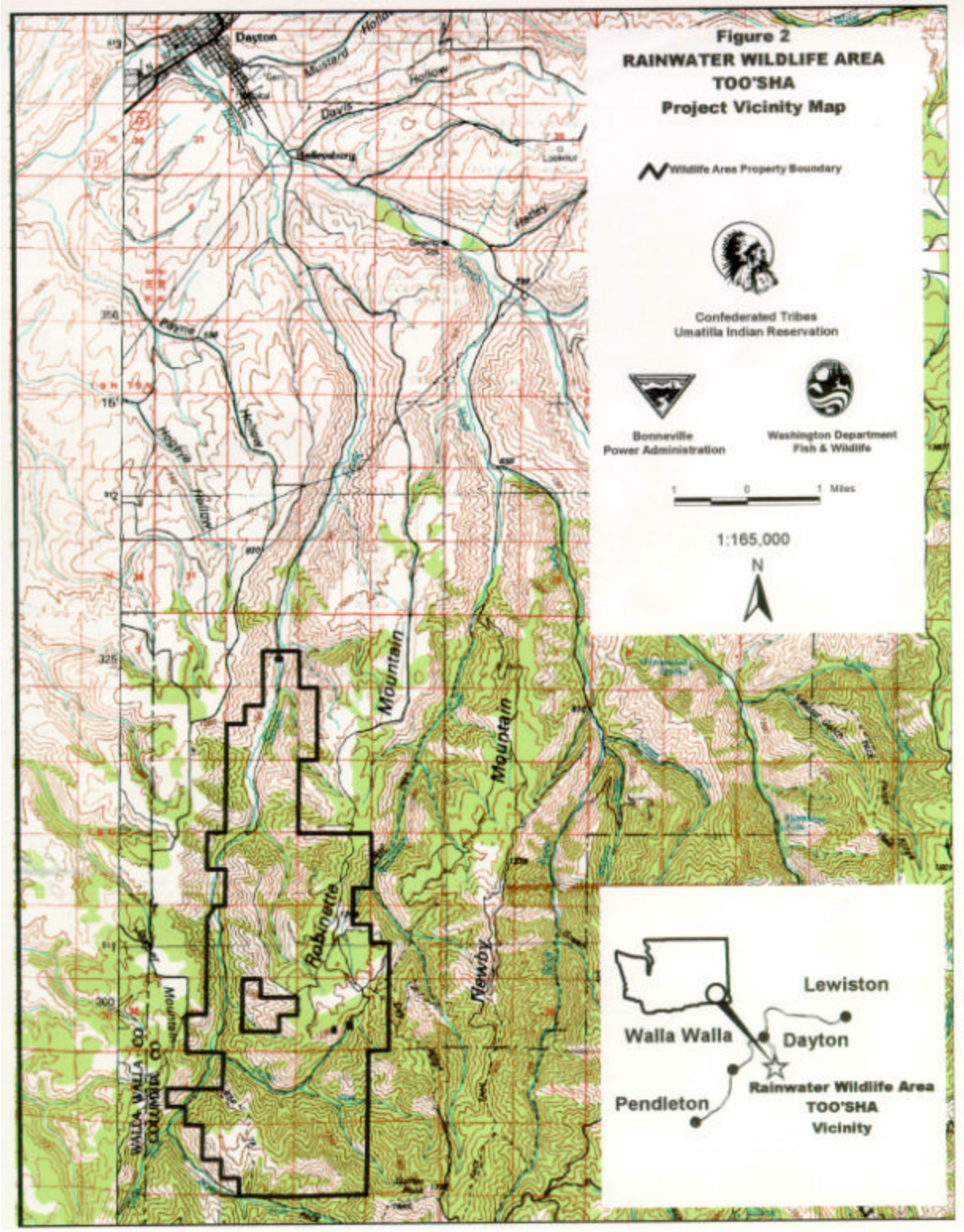


Figure 2 – Project Vicinity Map



Purpose and Need

The purpose of the project is to protect, enhance, and mitigate fish and wildlife resources impacted by Columbia River Basin hydroelectric development. The effort is one of several wildlife mitigation projects in the region developed to compensate for terrestrial habitat losses resulting from the construction of McNary and John Day Hydroelectric facilities located on the mainstem Columbia River.

Goals and Objectives

While this project is driven primarily by the purpose and need to mitigate for wildlife habitat losses, it is also recognized that management strategies will also benefit many other non-target fish and wildlife species and associated natural resources.

The Northwest Power Act directs the NPPC to develop a program to "protect, mitigate, and enhance" fish and wildlife of the Columbia River and its tributaries. The overarching goals include:

- A Columbia River ecosystem that sustains an abundant, productive, and diverse community of fish and wildlife.
- Mitigation across the basin for the adverse effects to fish and wildlife caused by the development and operation of the hydrosystem.
- Sufficient populations of fish and wildlife for abundant opportunities for tribal trust and treaty right harvest and for non-tribal harvest.
- Recovery of the fish and wildlife affected by the development and operation of the hydrosystem that are listed under the Endangered Species Act

Wildlife Mitigation Species Objectives

- Restore natural range of variability for structural stages and plant community groups in Forest, Grass & Shrubland, and Riparian Cover Types
- Increase quality and quantity of forest cover habitat for big game and other wildlife
- Maintain and promote high quality big game/wildlife security habitat
- Maintain and/or promote optimum forest stand conditions
- Increase availability of snag and log habitat
- Restore native grasslands and decrease the occurrence of noxious weeds and/or competing and unwanted vegetation
- Restore riparian and wetland habitat along the South Fork Touchet River, Griffin Fork, and other streams in the study area

Fisheries and Watershed Objectives

- Improve water quality (decrease high summer water temperature)
- Improve width:depth ratio on fish bearing streams
- Increase stream channel sinuosity and reduce stream gradient
- Encourage development of single threaded, consolidated low flow channel (reduce unnatural stream braiding) and reconnect streams to their floodplains
- Increase frequency of large, complex pool habitat
- Increase vegetative cover within floodplain to provide shade, floodplain stability, and future large woody debris
- Improve streambank stability and reduce erosion from both floodplain and upland sources
- Stabilize headcuts in South Fork Touchet River floodplain, particularly those associated with drawbottom roads and skid trails
- Encourage recolonization of beaver

Guiding Policies and Management Direction

- Northwest Power Planning Council Fish and Wildlife Program
- Wildlife Mitigation Program Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Record of Decision (ROD), DOE/EIS-0246, (BPA, March 1997)
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Wildlife Code

This NPPC Fish and Wildlife Program, and more information about the Council, its fish, wildlife and power planning activities, and public involvement opportunities, can be found at the Council's website: www.nwppc.org

Common Elements and Assumptions Related to Wildlife Area Management

CTUIR Responsibilities and Obligations - As a fee owner of the wildlife area, the CTUIR has the responsibility to conduct all aspects of land ownership and management consistent with the NPPC Program, BPA/CTUIR MOA, and applicable Tribal, Federal, State, and local laws and regulations. The CTUIR is required through the CTUIR/BPA MOA to manage and operate the property for the primary purpose of fish and wildlife habitat protection and enhancement.

Federal and State Laws and Regulations - The overall framework for developing management strategies for the Rainwater Wildlife Area is embedded in the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, P.L. 96-501 (Act). Under the Act. BPA has authority pursuant to sections 2 (e) and (f) of the Bonneville Project Act, 16 U.S.C. 832a (e), (f) to transfer real properties to the CTUIR. In addition to the Act, the Washington Wildlife Mitigation Agreement and its amendments (Interim Agreement, BPA et al., 1993) and the CTUIR/BPA MOA (October, 1997) to provide additional criteria for managing the property. The MOA is available upon request through the BPA Portland Office.

Public Access - Legal public access was established for the first time on the property in 1998 concurrent with the land purchase by the CTUIR. The CTUIR/BPA MOA in Section 14 states that: "The general public shall have reasonable public access to the Properties. The CTUIR may regulate access consistent with its laws, customs, and Management Plan objectives, provided, that road and trail access and transportation restrictions shall apply equally to tribal members and non-tribal members. Nothing in this Agreement limits the right or ability of the CTUIR to manage the Properties to preserve and protect cultural, historic, and religious sites." Tribal and non-tribal publics receive equal consideration in regards to their ability to access the Rainwater Wildlife Area.

Right of Ways and Landowner Access - The Rainwater property contains two private land parcels and abuts private land on the east, west, and northern property boundaries. Through Washington State Law, private landowners maintain a right to access their property. The CTUIR cannot prevent access or "landlock" private landowners.

Coordination and Public Involvement

Beginning in October 1998, the CTUIR has held two formal public meetings in Dayton, Washington to conduct public scoping and solicit input on the management plan. An advisory committee consisting of local government, state agencies, landowners, and public interests was established to help guide development of the management. The Advisory Committee met regularly from late 1999 through early 2001 to develop the scoping document and draft management plan. In October 1999, the CTUIR completed a Management Plan Scoping document to present the management framework for the wildlife area and solicit public input. Information from public meetings and discussion of the advisory committee culminated into the Draft Management Plan, which is presented for additional public review. To further enhance public involvement, the Draft Management Plan has been uploaded onto the CTUIR Website for public review at: www.umatilla.nsn.us.

II. KEY ISSUES

Issues were identified through internal analysis and solicitation of public input through the scoping document. Key CTUIR goals affecting issue development include protecting and enhancing cultural resources and providing access for cultural uses. Primary issues identified through the scoping document from the general public were related to recreation and access. Four key issues were subsequently incorporated into the management plan for evaluation and development of management strategies.

- Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat Mitigation
- Fish Habitat and Watershed Health
- Native Plant Communities, Noxious Weed Control, and Competing and Unwanted Vegetation
- Recreation and Public Access

III. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND EXISTING CONDITIONS

Physical Setting

The project is located in the North Blue Mountain Physiographic Province within the Walla Walla River Basin. Dominant landscape features of the wildlife area include relatively flat ridgetops with interior forest habitat on Robinette Mountain and steep canyon lands bisected by a mosaic of grass/shrub plant communities and stringer timber draws with a wide, gentle riparian floodplain associated with the South Fork Touchet River. Average topographic relief in the northern half of the property is 800 feet above sea level with a maximum elevation of about 4,860 feet in the southern portion of the wildlife area.

Climate

The climate of the wildlife area is typical of mid elevation Blue Mountain regions. The majority of annual precipitation in the South Fork Touchet River subwatershed accumulates as snow from October through late May, with intense thunder and lightning storms occurring in the late summer and early fall. Annual precipitation ranges from 25 to 40 inches. Ambient temperatures exhibit seasonal variation with maximum average temperatures during summer exceeding 80^0F and minimum temperatures falling below 20^0F during winter months (U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, 1997).

Soils

According to the Soil Survey of Columbia County Area, Washington, U.S. Dept Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service (Natural Resource Conservation Service), December, 1973, the project area contains two primary soil associations: the Couse-Larkin Association and the Tolo-Gwin Association. Soil resource maps are contained in the project analysis file. The Couse-Larkin Soil Association is predominantly found on gently sloping to steep slopes, are well drained, and moderately fine textured soils that formed in wind-laid silts, volcanic ash, and weathered basalt. The Tolo-Gwin Soil Association is found on strongly sloping to very steep slopes and are of medium-textured soils. This association includes rocky soils that formed in wind-laid silts and volcanic ash.

Fish and Wildife Habitat

The Rainwater Wildlife Area provides suitable habitat for a wide variety of Blue Mountain Province flora and fauna. The Walla Walla Subbasin is inhabited by 10 amphibian species, 207 avian species, 69 mammalian species, and 15 reptile species. The wildlife area is probably best known for its quality big game hunting. Located entirely within the WDFW Dayton Big Game Management Unit (#162), the area supports large populations of elk and deer. Other game animals include black bear, cougar, blue and ruffed grouse, wild turkey, and California quail. The area also provides habitat for a wide variety of forest dwelling birds such as woodpeckers, owls, insectivorous birds, accipiters and other hawks, and eagles.

The area contains approximately 10 miles of fish bearing streams, including the South Fork Touchet River and Griffin Fork. Federally listed threatened summer steelhead trout and bull trout, resident redband trout, lamprey (unknown species), dace, red-sided shiner, and sculpin all occur within the wildlife area. Despite poor to fair instream habitat conditions, the wildlife area supports large populations of anadromous and resident fish. Fish population sampling indicates the area currently supports nearly 15,000 resident rainbow trout and/or juvenile summer steelhead. Bull trout have also been observed in the South Fork Touchet and Griffin Fork, although existing populations are thought to be very low.

The wildlife area contains about 5,000 acres forestland, 2,900 acres of grassland and shrubland, and 800 acres of floodplain/riparian habitat. Forestland consists primarily of grand fir and Douglas-fir dominated timber stands with ponderosa pine occurring on south and southwest slopes. In their native states, grassland communities include Idaho fescue, bluebunch wheatgrass, and Sandberg's bluegrass. Primary shrublands include snowberry, wild rose, mallow ninebark, and ocean spray. Riparian plant communities include black cottonwood, sitka alder, willow, dogwood, and coniferous species. Nearly 90 years of fire suppression, extensive timber harvest, and livestock grazing have shaped current vegetation conditions in the study area. In general, past management practices have increased the occurrence of earlier successional and structural stages and altered plant community composition.

Following is a brief description of the three major cover types and assessment of existing conditions.

Forestland Cover Type

As noted above, much of the forestland has been logged over and is currently in a young forest condition. Less than 5 percent of the forested land base contains old growth habitat. Small patches of old growth remain in localized areas on Robinette Mountain and on slopes in the Burnt Fork drainage. Logging on Robinette Mountain has been limited during the past 3 to 4 decades and contains pole to sawtimber sized forest stands with relatively good cover habitat. Forestland on Robinette is the most productive ground within the study area.

Conversely, forest stands in the Griffin Fork and South Fork Touchet River corridors have been extensively logged in the past several decades with logging as recently as 1996 in the Griffin Fork drainage. The vast majority of these stands contain scattered, large diameter overstory trees, with a varying age class understory. Most previously harvested stands, however, are stocked with a regenerating understory with the exception of stands along the South Fork Touchet River.

Grass and Shrubland Cover Type

A mixture of native or "native like" grassland communities occurs generally on southern and southwestern-facing slopes. Plant communities include Idaho Fescue-Bluebunch wheatgrass (Festuca idahoensis-Agropyron spicatum, FEID-AGSP), Bluebunch wheatgrass-Sandberg's bluegrass (Agropyron spicatum-Poa sandbergii, AGSP-POSA3), and Common snowberry-rosehip (Symphoricarpos albus-Rosa gymnocarpa, SYAL-ROSA).

Riparian Cover Type

The study area contains extensive riparian/floodplain habitat associated with the South Fork Touchet, Griffin Fork, and other streams. Of the 378 terrestrial species known to occur in the Blue Mountains, 285 are either directly dependent on riparian zones or utilize them more than other habitats. Overall riparian conditions ranged from poor in the lower portions of the study area to fair/good in the upper portions of the Griffin Fork. Because of past management activities such as logging and grazing, coupled with recent, large flood events, riparian plant communities are generally in an early seral stage with the exception of scattered patches or small islands of mature conifer and black cottonwood galleries. Of particular concern is the low percentage of hydrophytic vegetation such as black cottonwood (Populus balsamifera s trichocarpa), sitka alder (Alnus viridis s. sinuata), red osier dogwood (Cornus sericea s. sericea), syringa, mock orange (Philadelphus lewisii), and willow species (salix spp.).

Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP)

The Rainwater Wildlife Area was established to offset wildlife habitat losses associated with hydroelectric power development in the Columbia River Basin. As such, BPA will receive habitat credits against the losses in return for protecting and enhancing habitat values on Rainwater. Crediting is determined through the use of a habitat assessment methodology and accounting tool referred to as the Habitat Evaluation Procedures (HEP) developed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Under this methodology, target wildlife mitigation species are selected to best represent the various habitat types within a project area. Under this methodology, both habitat quantity and quality are evaluated through habitat surveys and analytical models. Habitat quality is assigned a numerical value on a scale of 0 to 1.0, known as a habitat suitability index (HSI) with 1.0 being optimum habitat. The product of HEP is the Habitat Unit (HU) whereby one HU is defined as one acre of habitat with an HSI of 1.0.

Nine target species were subsequently selected for the Rainwater Wildlife Area to assess three primary cover types on the wildlife area (e.g., forest, grassland, and riparian). Target species include: Downy Woodpecker (Picoides pubescens); Black-Capped Chickadee (Parus atricopillus); Blue Grouse Mule Deer (Dendragapus obscurus); Mule Deer (Odocoileus hemionus); Western Meadowlark (Stunella neglecta); Great Blue Heron (Ardea herodias); Yellow Warbler (Dendraica petechia); Spotted Sandpiper (Actitis macularia); and Mink (Mustela vison).

The HEP anlaysis for the wildlife area is currently in the final stages of development with model runs and development of a HEP report underway. The final assessment is expected to be completed in early 2002. Preliminary assessment indicates that the Rainwater Wildlife Area will generated over 7,000 protection HU's and an additional 3,000 enhancement HU's.

Noxious Weeds and Competing and Unwanted Vegetation

Disturbance of the grass and shrubland ecosystems by livestock and road development in the wildlife area has contributed to the spread of introduced grasses and weeds including cheat grass (Bromus tectorum), yellow starthistle (Centaurea solstitialis), Ventenata (Ventenata dubia), and other non-native annual species. All 19 grassland transects sampled in the study area by the CTUIR contained exotic grasses and forbs. Yellow starthistle is particularly abundant along the lower South Fork Touchet River corridor and on the Dry Touchet Ridge. Introduced vegetation species often compete with native vegetation species reducing the suitability of habitat available to the wildlife species adapted to it (Quigley and Arbelbide 1997a). Ongoing weed control efforts on the wildlife area include chemical, biological, and manual treatment tools to decrease occurrence of noxious weeds and undesireable plants and increase native and/or native-like plant communities.

Threatened, Endangered, Sensitive & Candidate Species

The Wildlife Area provides habitats that meet part or all of the life history needs of Federally listed threatened and endangered species and State of Washington Sensitive Species. The Rainwater area is within the known and/or suspected range of several species of concern. Specific of concern known to occur in the wildlife area include: Summer steelhead trout, bull trout, bald eagle, golden eagle, northern goshawk, black-backed woodpecker, and pileated woodpecker. Future restoration plans and ground disturbing activities will be evaluated to determine whether project activities would affect individual species of concern. Development of biological assessments and consultation with appropriate Federal agencies will be accomplished consistent with the Endangered Species Act.

Cultural Resources

The CTUIR Cultural Resource Protection Program (CRPP) conducted an investigation of archaeological and cultural resources on the Rainwater Wildlife Area beginning in June, 1999. The investigation consisted of a file and literature search for known information, oral history, and field survey on about 1,400 acres. Walker (1998), in the Plateau volume of the *Handbook of North American Indians,* identifies the Cayuse, Palouse, and Walla Walla Indians as having lived in the vicinity of the Rainwater Wildlife Area. The area was utilized by area tribes in the spring, summer, and fall for gathering roots, berries, and other plant materials, fishing, and hunting with associated temporary campsites. The earliest settlers in the vicinity of the project area were fur trappers. Farmer and ranchers began settling in the area around 1855. By 1870, there were an estimated 3,000 to 4,000 cattle and 10,000 sheep in the county. Proposed management activities that require ground disturbance will need to undergo additional site-specific review to ensure protection of any known and/or suspected cultural resources.

Recreation and Public Use

The wildlife area is a popular for big game hunting area and receives heavy hunting pressure during elk season. Other uses include upland game bird hunting, fishing, camping, and big game antler collection. Historically, public access to the property was limited when under ownership by the Rainwater family (personal Communication with Dale Rainwater, July 1999). Under ownership by large timber corporations beginning in the late 1980's, members of the public were allowed to access the property, first through fee hunting operations, and then under a cooperative program through the Access and Habitat Program administered by the WDFW. Miller Shingle Company initially entered into the agreement with WDFW in the early 1990's. Since

establishment of the wildlife area, the CTUIR has continued management of the property under the WDFW Access and Habitat Feel Free to Hunt Program. Overall public user response has been positive with 100's of hours of recreational hunting occurring annually on the property.

Access and Travel Management

The study area contains nearly 40 miles of road, most of which are composed of unimproved dirt surface, contain poor drainage, and are located on extremely steep slopes. Road-related, fine sediment delivery to fish bearing streams is of major concern and is a focus of ongoing and future watershed restoration efforts. In addition to water quality and fish habitat considerations, roads and vehicular access adversely affect wildlife habitat security. Roads eliminate habitat area, disrupt daily and seasonal movement patterns, increase harassment, and decrease habitat security. All these factors point to why access and travel management planning is integral to management of the wildlife area.

Since acquisition of the property in 1998, the CTUIR and WDFW have implemented an access and travel plan that was in-place prior to the establishing the wildlife area. Under the existing plan, approximately 3 miles of the Robinette Mountain Road and 2.5 miles of the South Fork Touchet River Road are open to public motorized travel. The Scoping Document identified several modifications to the strategy to address resource issues, including changing access on the Robinette Mountain Road to seasonal instead of year round to maintain habitat security on big game winter range and closure of the South Fork Touchet River road to protect threatened summer steelhead and bull trout and minimize adverse effects to water quality. Public review of these proposals generated much debate. In particular, the proposed seasonal closure of the Robinette Mountain Road generated more comments than any other issue contained in the scoping document. Following review of this information, the Draft Management Plan proposes to maintain the Robinette Mountain Road open year-round. Potential seasonal closures, however, may be implemented to address situations such as extreme fire hazards during fire season.

During the summer of 2000, tribal staff installed five new gates on the property. Several gates were installed on roads utilized by adjacent and/or interior private landowners. Gates were also installed on the northern end of the property on both the Robinette Mountain road and South Fork Touchet River road. All gates within the exception of those located on the Robinette and South Fork River roads have been closed and locked. Keys have been distributed to individual landowners, WDFW law enforcement staff, and WADNR Fire Management staff. The gate on the South Fork Touchet River is planned for closure pending permit approval by Columbia County. Other road management related activities accomplished during the 1999-2000 field seasons under the Washington Salmon Recovery Program included installation of improved drainage (water bars, dips, and culvert clean-out) on approximately 4 miles of existing road, and obliteration of approximately 4 miles of road located along the South Fork Touchet River, Griffin Fork, and in a tributary to the Burnt Fork. Road obliteration consisted of removal of road prism, installation of cross drains, placement of woody debris, seeding, and tree planting.

Property Lines, Fences, and Developments

Landlines are not well established for the boundary of the Rainwater Wildlife Area and boundary fences are generally in poor repair and/or non-existent. Very few developments occur on the property. The recently acquired Pugh parcel located in the central portion of the property on Robinette Mountain contains a couple of old wooden structures that the CTUIR proposed to maintain. Under this plan, the CTUIR proposes to establish an approximate 3 acre "Administrative Site" and intends to utilize the facilities as temporary headquarters for

management of the property. The designation would effectively remove the site from unauthorized public use. In addition, new fence construction has been identified on the eastern, northern, and western property boundaries to minimize trespass livestock and protect wildlife values.

IV. DESIRED FUTURE CONDITIONS AND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

Management activities are designed to address key issues, achieve goals and biological objectives, and move the project area towards the desired future conditions. Baseline habitat conditions and the desired condition are the basis for prescribing habitat enhancements and prioritizing management activities. Desired future conditions are conditions projected into the future for various resources and are used to plan and implement habitat enhancements.

Desired Future Conditions (DFC's)

The purpose of the DFC is to provide overall guidance for management of the cover types on the project area so that there is always a management direction (in conjunction with mitigation objectives) that helps drive vegetation manipulation and habitat management. Habitat specific DFC's were developed to optimize habitat conditions for indidual target wildlife mitigation species, where possible.

General

Much of the Wildlife Area is currently in an early stage of succcessional development because of past management practices (i.e., logging, grazing, etc). A general DFC for the area is to create a mosaic of plant communities in varying stages of successional development. Based on an analysis of Historic Range of Variability, described fully in the Management Plan, the following DFC has been developed:

- Approximately 15-30% of the area would be in a Very Early to Early Seral condition
- Approximately 45-55% of the area would be in a Mid Seral condition
- Approximately 15-35% of the area would be in a Late Seral condition

Forestland

- Develop fully stocked timber stands through site preparation and planting
- Facilitate cover development, tree growth, and maintain tree vigor and forest health through pre-commercial and commercial thinning
- Increase available snag and log habitat
- Increase basal area and corresponding canopy/thermal cover
- Reduce sight distances and provide hiding cover
- Return roads not needed for future management to tree, grass, and shrub production
- Decrease noxious weeds adjacent to roads and within log landings

Grass & Shrubland

The desired condition for the study area in regard to noxious weeds and other competing and unwanted vegetation is to:

- Control the spread of noxious weeds and reduce/eradicate if and where possible
- Reduce the percent composition of non-native annual vegetation
- Increase percent composition of native and/or native-like, perennial grasses such as bluebunch wheatgrass and Sandberg's bluegrass.

Riparian

The DFC's for riparian cover types include the following:

- Facilitate recovery and establishment of hydrophytic as well as upland vegetation
- Increase recruitment of cottonwood trees into the larger overstory size classes
- Increase density of native shrub and subcanopy cover.

Habitat Enhancement and Protection

Enhancement activities may be considered those actions designed and undertaken to increase the suitability of habitats above existing conditions. Enhancements typically include active forms of restoration such as site preparation and planting. Protection activities are generally designed to protect existing habitat values from degradation or prevent disturbance to wildlife. However, protection and enhancement activities may occasionally overlap, such as in the case of livestock exclusion and subsequent increase in the amount of riparian shrub habitats.

Habitat enhancements will be focused in several key areas. The South Fork Touchet River corridor will receive a great deal of attention due to its importance to both fish and wildlife resources and potential for substantial improvement in biological condition. Approximately 7 miles of habitat enhancement consisting of natural channel design, large wood placement, additional drawbottom road obliteration, and revegetation activities are planned. Grassland habitat enhancement and noxious weed control is also a high priority with focus being placed along the Dry Touchet Ridge as illustrated in Figure 3. Grassland enhancements include a combination of treatments including prescribed burning, seeding, and weed control.

Habitat enhancements in forest cover types include thinning to maintain tree vigor and optimum growth rates, tree planting to bring currently understocked stands to fully stocked conditions, and limited snag creation to facilitate development of decadence and availablility of snag habitat. Several miles of road are planned for obliteration/decommissioning throughout the wildlife area. Roads selected for removal are those that are causing resource damage because of their location or are not needed for future resource management on the wildlife area.

The following types of habitat enhancements are planned on the wildlife area to achieve objectives. Figure 3 illustrates key locations of enhancement activities.

- Tree and Shrub Planting
- Forest Thinning
- Slash Pile Burning
- Snag Creation

- Road Decommissioning and Maintenance
- Grassland Enhancement
- Noxious Weed and Competing and Unwanted Vegetation Control
- Instream and Floodplain Restoration
- Boundary Estalishment (land line surveys) and Signage
- Boundary Fence Construction
- Cattle Guard Installation

Operations and Maintenance

Operations and maintenance activities address the custodial needs of the project area, such as fence and road maintenance and repair as well as administrative needs. Public use and access and travel management includes implementation of area and seasonal access restrictions, including means of travel, and installation of facilities necessary to effectively educate the user and implement the restrictions. Project administration will be accomplished primarily by the CTUIR. Administrative functions include, but are not limited to: budget planning, development and implementation of maintenance and enhancement activities, patrolling, signing, public information and assistance, and interagency coordination. Operations and maintenance also include the following:.

- Maintenance and Facilities
- Fire Management and Protection
- Law Enforcement
- Access and Travel Management Plan Implementation

V. PUBLIC USE AND ACCESS REGULATIONS

The following table describes management regulations for the wildlife area. Figure 4 illustrates the Access and Travel Management Plan.

Table 1– Summary of Wildlife Area Regulations

Use/Access Element	Management Strategy
Hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing	Wildlife area open to hunting and fishing. Consult State of Washington hunting and fishing regulations and/or CTUIR hunting and fishing regulations.
Trapping	Prohibited
Camping	Camping allowed. A 14-day limit is maximum allowable visit. Camping permitted only adjacent to open roads. No permanent/semi-permanent structures. Pit toilets w/in 300 feet of any water (stream, spring, wetland) prohibited.
Personal/Commercial firewood gathering	Firewood gathering prohibited. Use of campfire wood for campers is limited to dead and down material. Tree felling of any kind permitted.
Plant Gathering	Gathering of roots, berries, and mushrooms allowed for personal use only. No commercial gathering.
Motorized Use/Access	Motorized public access permitted on designated open road (Robinette Mountain Road only). All off-road motorized travel prohibited. Other forms of access (hiking, horseback) allowed.
Special Uses*	By permit only. Contact CTUIR Wildlife Area Manager.

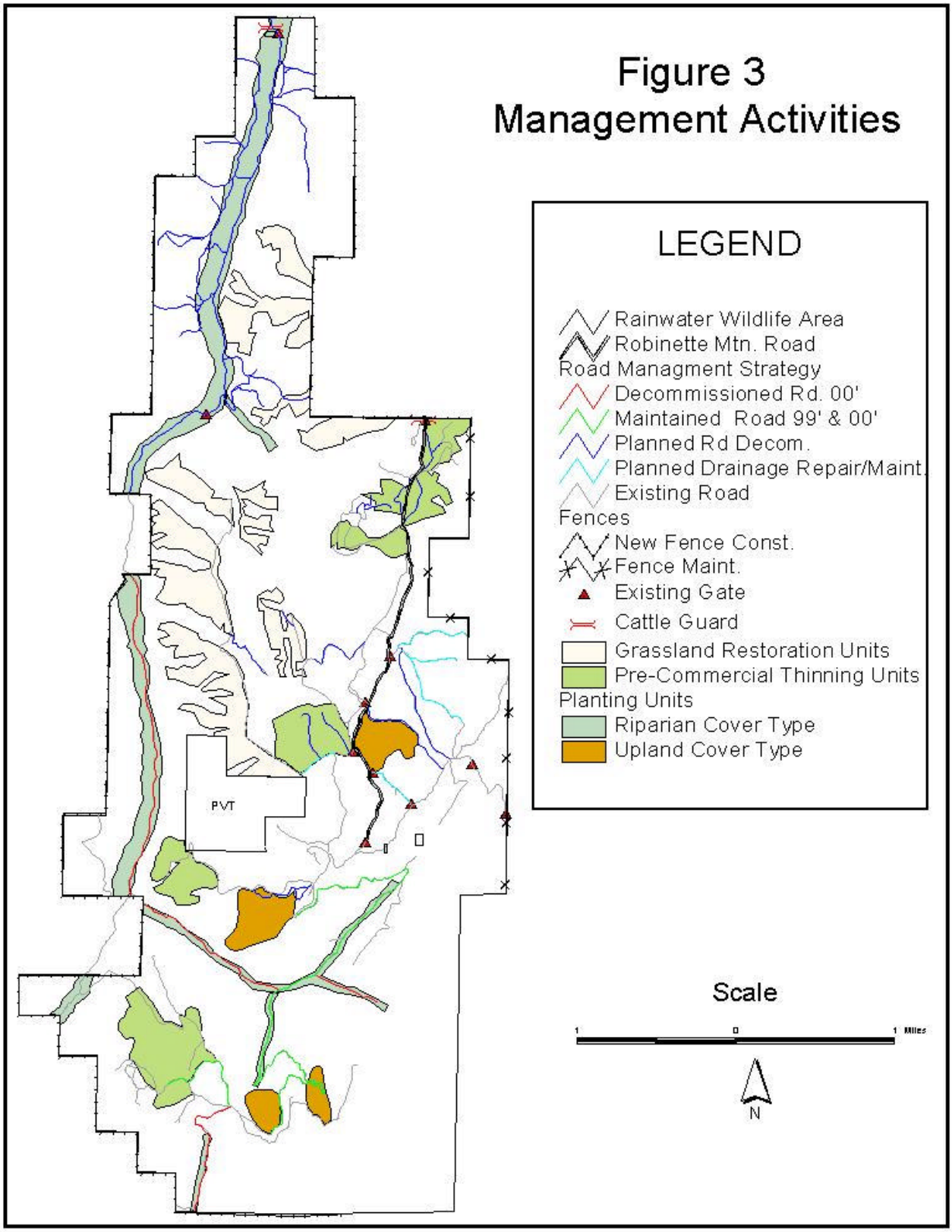
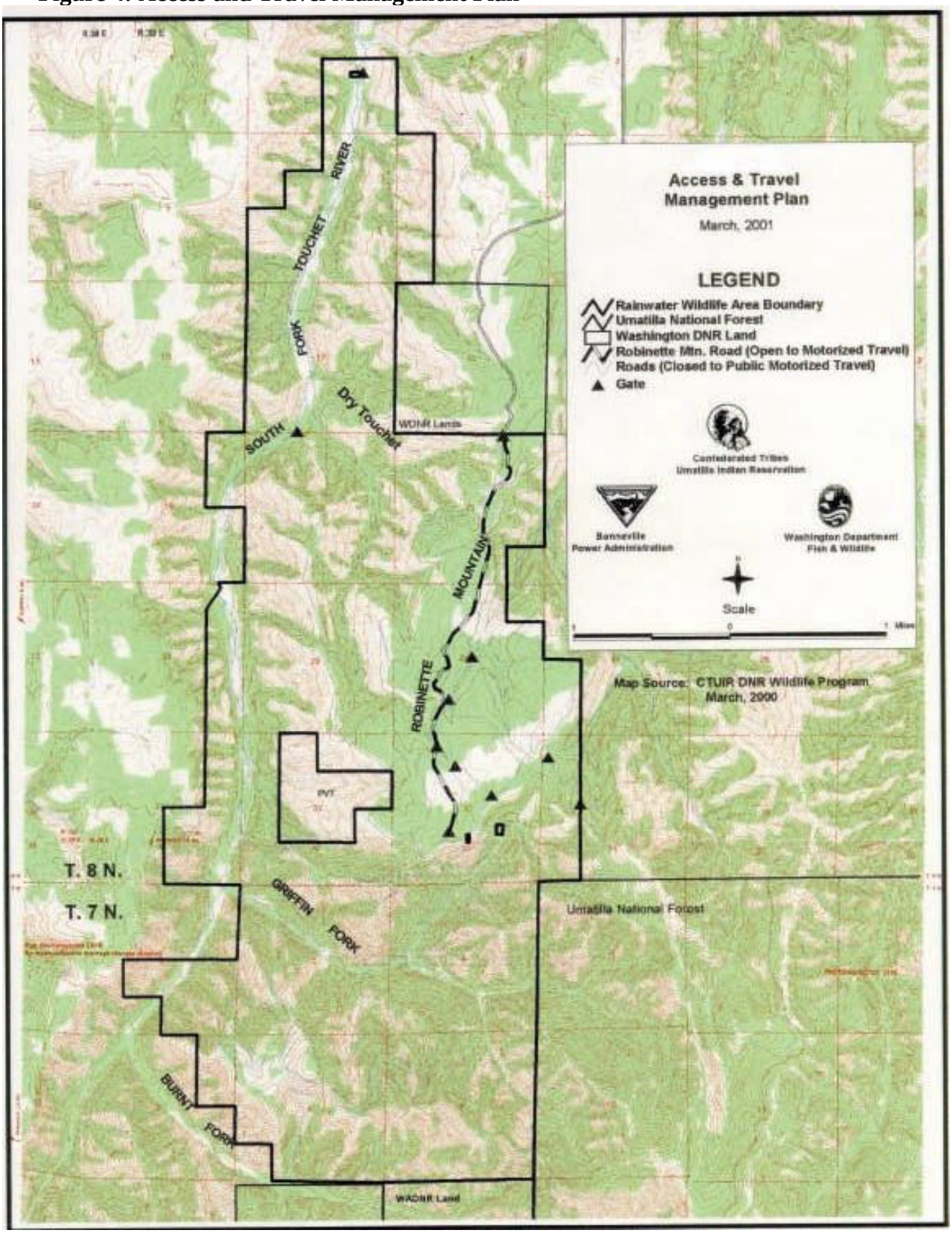


Figure 3
Management Activities
LEGEND
Rainwater Wildlife Area
Robinette Mtn. Road
Road Managment Strategy
Decommissioned Rd. 00'
Maintained Road 99' & 00'
Planned Rd Decom.
Planned Drainage Repair/Maint.
Existing Road
Fences
New Fence Const.
Fence Maint.
Existing Gate
Cattle Guard
Grassland Restoration Units
Pre-Commercial Thinning Units
Planting Units
Riparian Cover Type
Upland Cover Type
PVT
Scale
1
0
1 Miles
N

Figure 4: Access and Travel Management Plan



VI. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring is a tool for detecting change and a key component of adaptive management. Monitoring and evaluation helps measure success and/or failure of project activities and can assist in identifying potential problems before they become crisis. Monitoring and evaluation will be an ongoing component of management actions on the Rainwater Wildlife Area. Habitat monitoring will be conducted to assess structural characteristics and species composition as they relate to the objectives of this plan. Biological monitoring will address trends in wildlife populations and habitat use. Types of monitoring include photo points, habitat transects and plots, fish habitat surveys, fish population surveys, redd surveys, avian point count surveys, and big game population surveys.

VII. FIVE-YEAR PROJECT BUDGET

The following budget identifies necessary funding to accomplish the management activities described in Section IV. Additional detail is provided in the Management Plan. A review of the accomplishments and an update to the management plan and associated action plan will be completed in FY2006 in preparation for implementation beginning in FY2007.

Table 2-Estimated 5-Year Budget

Estimated Rainwater Wildlife Area Project 5-Year Budget						
PERSONNEL (3.25 FTE's)	**FTE**	**FY02**	**FY02**	**FY03**	**FY04**	**FY06**
DNR Mgt/Admin.	0.25					
Project Biologist/Manager	0.50					
Assist Wildlife Bio/Technicians	2.50					
SALARIES		**$123,002**	**$126,432**	**$132,034**	**$135,815**	**$139,786**
TRAVEL AND VEHICLES		$11,495	$11,495	$11,495	$11,495	$11,495
COMMUNICATIONS		$1,200	$1,200	$1,400	$1,400	$1,400
SERVICES, SUPPLIES, & MATERIALS		$15,000	$15,750	$16,050	$16,050	$16,050
Equipment		$0	$5,000	$0	$5,000	$5,000
Equipment repairs and maintenance		$3,000	$3,000	$3,000	$3,500	$3,500
Vegetation (seed, trees, & shrubs)		$5,000	$15,000	$15,000	$20,000	$20,000
Sign materials		$4,500	$500	$500	$500	$500
INDIRECT		$55,487	$60,648	$61,023	$65,878	$67,228
ENHANCEMENTS, OPERATIONS & MAINTENANCE						
Subcontractors (land survey, archaeology survey, fence construction, weed control, heavy equipment, prescribed burning)		$61,316	$61,000	$70,000	$78,000	$77,500
TOTAL BUDGET		$280,000	$300,025	$310,501	$337,639	$342,459